



Old Hickory Never Turns a Hair.

bundles. "Toys for a weary toiler. Let's inspect his selection. Now what's this in the box, Torchy?"

"Cut-up picture puzzle," says I. "Two hundred pieces. You fit 'em together."

"Fine!" says Old Hickory. "And this?"

"Ring toss," says I. "You try to throw them rope rings over the peg."

"I see," says he. "Excellent! That will be very amusing and instructive. Here's an airgun too."

"Ellins," says Doc Hirshway, "do you mean to say that at your age you are going to play with such childish things?"

"Why not?" says Old Hickory. "You forbid business. I must employ myself in some way, and Torchy recommends these."

"Bah!" says the Doc disgusted. "If I didn't know you so well, I should think your mind was affected."

"Think what you blamed please, you bald-headed old pill peddler!" raps back the boss, pokin' him playful in the ribs. "I'll bet you a fiver I can put more of these rings over than you can."

"Humph!" says the Doc. "I've no time to waste on silly games." And he stands by watchin' disapprovin' while Old Hickory makes an awkward stab at the peg. The nearest he comes to it is when he chucks one through the glass door of a curio cabinet, with a smash that brings the butler tiptoein' in.

"Did you ring, Sir," says Marston.

"Not a blamed one!" says Mr. Ellins. "Take it away, Marston. And then unwrap that large package. There! Now what the tessellated teacups is that?"

IT'S something I didn't know anything about myself; but the young gent at the store had been strong for puttin' it in, so I'd let it slide. It's a tin affair, painted bright green, with half a dozen little brass cups sunk in it. Some rubber balls and a kind of croquet mallet goes with it.

"Indoor golf!" says Old Hickory, readin' the instruction pamphlet. "Oh, I see! A putting green. Set it there on the rug, Marston. Now let's see if I've forgotten how to putt."

We all gathers around while he tries to roll the balls into the cups. Out of six tries he lands just one. Next time he don't get any at all.

"Pooh!" says the Doc, edgin' up int'rested. "Wretched putting form, Ellins, wretched! Don't tap it that way: sweep it along—follow through, with your right elbow out. Here, let me show you!"

But Hirshway don't do much better. He manages to get two in; but one was a rank scratch.

"Ho-ho!" cackles Old Hickory. "Isn't so easy as it looks, eh, Hirshway? Now it's my turn again, and I'm betting ten I beat you."

"I take you," says the Doc.

And blamed if Old Hickory don't pull down the money! Well, that's what started things. Next I knew they'd

laid out a reg'lar golf course, drivin' off from the rug in front of the desk, through the double doors into the drawin' room, then across the hall into the music room, around the grand piano to the left, through the back hall, into the lib'ry once more, and onto the tin green.

Marston is sent to dig out a couple sets of old golf clubs from the attic, and he is put to caddyin' for the Doc, while I carries the bag for the boss. Course they was usin' putters mostly, except for fancy loftin' strokes over bunkers that they'd built out of books and sofa pillows. And as the balls was softer than the regulation golf kind, with more bounce to 'em, all sorts of carom strokes was ruled in.

"No moving the chairs," announces Old Hickory. "All pieces of furniture are natural hazards."

"Agreed," says the Doc. "Playing stimies too, I suppose?"

"Stimies go," says the boss.

Say, maybe that wa'n't some batty performance, with them two old duffers golfin' all over the first floor of a Fifth-ave. house, disputin' about strokes, pokin' balls out from under tables and sofas, and me and Marston followin' along with the bags. They got as excited over it as if they'd been playin' for the international Championship, and when Old Hickory loses four strokes by gettin' his ball wedged in a corner he cuts loose with the real golfy language.

WE was just finishin' the first round, with the score standin' fourteen to seventeen in favor of the Doc, when the front doorbell rings and a maid comes towlin' in Piddie. Maybe his eyes don't stick out some too, as he takes in the scene. But Mr. Ellins is preparin' to make a shot for position in front of the green and he don't pay any attention.

"It's Mr. Piddie, Sir," says I.

"Hang Mr. Piddie!" says Old Hickory. "I can't see him now."

"But it's very important," says Piddie. "There's someone at the office who—"

"No, no, not now!" snaps the boss impatient.

And I gives Piddie the back-out signal. But you know how much sense he's got.

"I assure you, Mr. Ellins," he goes on, "that this is—"

"S-s-s-st!" says I. "Boom-boom! Outside!" and I jerks my thumb towards the door.

That settles Piddie. He fades.

A minute later Old Hickory gets a lucky carom off a chair leg and holes out in nineteen, with the Doc playin' twenty-one.

"Ha, ha!" chuckles the boss. "What's the matter with my form now, Hirshway? I'll go you another hole for the same stake."

The Doc was sore and eager to get back. They wa'n't much more'n fairly started, though, before there's other arrivals, that turns out to be no less than two of our directors, lookin' serious and worried.

"Mr. Rawson and Mr. Dunham," announces the maid.

"Here, Boy!" says the boss, catchin' me by the elbow. "What was that you said to Mr. Piddie,—that 'Boom-boom!' greeting?"

I gives it to him and the Doc in a stage whisper.

"Good!" says he. "Get that, Hirshway? Now let's spring it on 'em. All together now— S-s-s-st! Boom-boom! Outside!"

Say, it makes a hit with the directors, all right. First off they didn't seem to know whether they'd strayed into a bughouse, or are just bein' cheered; but when they sees Old Hickory's mouth corners they concludes to take it as a josh. It turns out that both of 'em are golf cranks too, and inside of three minutes they've forgot whatever it was they'd come for, they've shed their coats, and have been rung into a foursome.

Honest, of all the nutty performances! For there was no tellin' where them balls would roll to, and whenever they went the giddy old boys had to follow. I remember one of 'em was stretched out full length on his tummy in the front hall, tryin' to make a billiard shot from under a low hall seat, when there's another ring at the bell, and Marston, with a golf bag still slung over his shoulder, lets in a square-jawed, heavy-set old gent who glares around like he was lookin' for trouble and would be disappointed if he didn't find it.

"Mr. Peter K. Groff," announces Marston.

"Goodnight!" says I to myself. "The enemy is in our midst."

BUT Old Hickory never turns a hair. He stands there in his shirt sleeves gazin' calm at this grizzly old minin' plute, and then I sees a kind of cut-up twinkle flash in them deep-set eyes of his as he summons his foursome to gather around. I didn't know what was comin', either, until they cuts loose with it. And for havin' had no practice they rips it out strong.

"S-s-s-st! Boom-boom! Outside!" comes the chorus. It gets Peter K's goat too. His jaw comes open and his eyes pop. Next he swallows hard and flushes red behind the ears. "Ell ns," says he, "I've come fifteen hundred miles to ask what you mean by tellin' me—"

"Oh, that you, Groff?" breaks in the boss. "Well, don't interrupt our game. Fore! You, I mean. Fore, there! Now go ahead, Rawson. Playing eleven, aren't you?"

And Rawson's just poked his ball out, makin' a neat carom into the music room, when the hall clock strikes five.

"By Jove, Gentlemen!" exclaims Doc Hirshway. "Sorry, but I must quit. Should have been in my office an hour ago. I really must go."

"Quitter!" says Mr. Ellins. "But all right. Trot along. Here, Groff, you're a golfer, aren't you?"

"Why—er—yes," says Peter K., actin' sort of dazed; "but I—"

"That's enough," says Old Hickory. "You take Hirshway's place. Dunham's your partner. We're playing Nassau, ten a corner. But I'll tell you,—just to make it interesting, I'll play you on the side to see whether or not we accept that proposition of yours. Is it a go?"

"But see here, Ellins," comes back Peter K. "I want you to understand that you or any other man can't tell me to sew my head in a bag without—"

"Oh, drop that!" says Old Hickory. "I withdraw it—mostly gout, anyway. You ought to know that. And if you can beat me at this game I'll agree to let you have your own way out there. Are you on, or are you too much of a dub to try it?"

"Maybe I am a dub, Hickory Ellins," says Peter K., peelin' off his coat, "but any game that you can play—er— Which is my ball?"

WELL, it was some warm contest, believe me, with them too joshin' back and forth, and at the same time usin' as much foxy strategy as if they was stealin' railroads away from each other! They must have been at it for near half an hour when a maid slips in and whispers how Mr. Robert is callin' for me on the wire. So I puts her on to sub for me with the bag while I slides into the 'phone booth.

"Sure, Mr. Robert," says I, "I'm still on the job."

"But what is happening?" says he. "Didn't Groff come up?"

"Yep," says I. "He's here yet."

"You don't say!" says Mr. Robert. "Whe-e-ew! He and the governor having it hot and heavy, I suppose?"

"And then some," says I. "Peter K. took the first round 12-17, he tied the second, and now he's trapped in the fireplace on a bad ten."

"Wha-a-at?" gasps Mr. Robert.

"Uh-huh," says I. "Mr. Ellins is layin' under the piano,—only seven, but stimied for an approach."

"In Heaven's name, Torchy," says Mr. Robert, "what do you mean? Mr. Groff trapped in the fireplace, father lying under the piano—why—"

"Ah, didn't Piddie tell you? The boob!" says I. "It's just golf, that's all—indoor kind—a batty variation that they made up themselves. But don't fret. Everything's all lovely, and I guess the Corrugated is saved. Come up and look 'em over."

Yep! Peter K. got the decision by slippin' over a smear in the fourth, after which him and Old Hickory leans up against each other and laughs until their eyes leak. Then Marston wheels in the tea wagon full of decanters and club soda, and when I left they was clinkin' glasses real chummy.

"Son," says Old Hickory, as he pads into the office about noon next day, "I believe I forgot the usual caddie fee. There you are."

"Z-z-z-zing!" says I, starin' after him.

Cute little strips of treasury kale, them with the C's in the corners, aren't they? Well, I should worry!